

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 155

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO LEAK OF CULTURAL WHITE PAPER

REF: QUEBEC 066

1. A VERSION OF MINISTER OF STATE FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CAMILLE LAURIN'S LONG-AWAITED WHITE PAPER ON CULTURE WAS LEAKED LAST WEEK TO MONTREAL'S LA PRESS, LE DEVOIR, AND TO RADIO-CANADA, THE CBC'S FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICE. LAURIN ANNOUNCED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER PUBLICATION THAT THE LEAKED PAPER WAS AN EARLY VERSION WHICH HAD SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN MODIFIED AND WHICH IS STILL UNDERGOING CHANGES. WE HAVE SEEN LITTLE REACTION SO FAR TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PAPER. IN CONTRAST TO THE OUTCRY THAT FOLLOWED PUBLICATION OF AN ARTICLE IN MACLEAN'S MAGAZINE LAST FEBRUARY WHICH CALLED THE WHITE PAPER A PRESCRIPTION FOR A "NEW ORDER" IN QUEBEC (REFTEL), REACTION TO THE LATEST LEAK SO FAR HAS TENDED TO CONCENTRATE INSTEAD ON SPECULATION AS TO THE PURPOSE OF THE LEAK RATHER THAN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE WHITE PAPER. THE FORMAL RELEASE OF THE WHITE PAPER, ORIGINALLY DUE LAST DECEMBER AND POSTPONED REPEATEDLY SINCE, IS NOW SAID TO BE DUE FOR JUNE, BUT THAT TARGET APPEARS FAR FROM FIRM AND
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WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE DOCUMENT DID NOT APPEAR UNTIL FALL OR EVEN LATER. MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM AND HOUSE LEADER ROBERT BURNS, COMMENTED RECENTLY TO AMBASSADOR ENDERS THAT IT MIGHT NOT BE OUT BEFORE DECEMBER.

2. THE LEAKED VERSION, THE BROAD OUTLINES OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BE ACCURATE, DEFINES

"CULTURE" IN THE BROADEST SENSE AND PROPOSES A LARGE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES IN MANY SECTORS, INCLUDING COMMUNICATIONS, HOUSING, EDUCATION, THE ARTS, AND HEALTH. "CULTURE AS A WHOLE," ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, "IS IN EFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH QUEBECERS LIVE." THE DOCUMENT GOES ON TO PROPOSE "A MATERIAL MINIMUM AND A CULTURAL MINIMUM" FOR ALL QUEBECERS.

3. TO ILLUSTRATE THE SWEEPING SCOPE OF THE PAPER, A PARTIAL LIST OF SPECIFIC MEASURES PROPOSED ARE:

- DECENTRALIZATION OF THE TELEVISION NETWORKS, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF REGIONAL NETWORKS;
- DECENTRALIZATION OF CABLE TELEVISION DISTRIBUTION;
- CREATION OF A QUEBEC NEWS AGENCY;
- CREATION OF A STATE CORPORATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF "CULTURAL INDUSTRIES;"
- "REPATRIATION" OF MUSEUMS, NATIONAL PARKS, AND HISTORIC SITES CURRENTLY OWNED AND MAINTAINED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT;
- CREATION OF COOPERATIVES FOR THE PRODUCTION AND SALE OF TRADITIONAL ART AND FOLK CRAFTS;
- STIMULATION OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS IN CHILD EDUCATION AND PROMOTION OF PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION;
- A COMPLETE REVISION OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE (CEGEP) PROGRAM;
- ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES;
- REDISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES DEVOTED TO HEALTH CARE;

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--SUBSIDIZATION AND REGULATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF FRENCH LANGUAGE BOOKS, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF BRINGING DOWN THEIR COST.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH PROPOSALS, OF COURSE, WOULD INVOLVE STATE INTERVENTION IN MATTERS OF LIFE AND CULTURE ON A SCALE PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN IN NORTH AMERICA, AND IS BOUND TO BE CONTROVERSIAL. NEVERTHELESS, CURRENT PRESS SPECULATION IS NOW FOCUSED ON THE REASONS FOR THE LEAK RATHER THAN THE PROGRAM ITSELF. SOME VIEW THE LEAK AS A CALCULATED TRIAL BALLOON FLOATED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN AN EFFORT TO GAUGE PUBLIC REACTION. OTHERS HAVE SPECULATED THAT THIS EARLY VERSION OF THE PAPER WAS LEAKED BY CIVIL SERVANTS INVOLVED IN ITS PREPARATION IN ORDER TO HIGHLIGHT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THIS ONE AND THE FINAL TEXT. WHATEVER THE REASON FOR THE LEAK, AND DESPITE THE MUTED REACTION SO FAR, THE PAPER WILL UNQUESTIONABLY BE A SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY IN COMING MONTHS. THERE IS ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT THERE ARE SHARP DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING BOTH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PAPER AND THE ADVISABILITY OF PUBLISHING IT AT ALL THIS YEAR. MANY PQ LEADERS INCLUDING LEVESQUE HIMSELF, ARE RELUCTANT TO INITIATE A BITTER PUBLIC DEBATE LIKE THAT WHICH

TOOK PLACE LAST YEAR OVER BILL 101, THE FRENCH LANGUAGE
CHARTER. ASIDE FROM THEIR WISH TO DEEMPHASIS PLANS FOR
CONTROVERSIAL REFORM DURING A PERIOD WHEN MOST QUEBECOIS ARE
PREOCCUPIED WITH THE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC RECESSION, LEVESQUE
AND OTHERS IN CABINET DO NOT WISH GIVE TRUDEAU SUCH OBVIOUS
TARGET PRIOR TO FEDERAL ELECTION. LAURIN AND HIS ZEALOUS
LIEUTENANTS, HOWEVER, ARE SAID TO BE PUSHIN G HARD TO SURFACE
THEIR BLUE PRINT FOR THE NEW QUEBEC SOCIETY SO THAT IT MAY
BE FULLY DEBATED AND APPRECIATED IN ALL ITS GLORY PRIOR
TO THE REFERENDUM, WHICH IS EXPECTED IN 1979. WHILE THE
MODERATES AND THE TECHNOCRATS HAVE DELAYED PUBLICATION AND
FORCED NUMEROUS AMENDMENTS, LAURIN HAS BEEN BUSY BUILDING SUPPORT
FOR EARLY RELEASE. REPORTEDLY, HE IS PRIVATELY USING THE
ARGUMENT, PERSUASIVE AMONG PARTY AND CABINET MILITANTS, THAT
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PUBLICATION OF WHITE PAPER WILL OUTFLANK ANY EFFORTS BY
LEVESQUE AND CLAUDE MORIN TO FURTHER WATER DOWN PQ TRADITIONAL
CONCEPT OF POLITICAL SUEVYVDSWKR TO SERVE ELECTORAL EXPEDIENCY.
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